

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
TRSE-00 CU-04 /063 W
-----123548 060927Z /17
R 060705Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5606

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 3421

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, KE
SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY CAMPUS RETURNS TO NORMAL

REF: NAIROBI 3279

1. MARCH 2 UNIVERSITY STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, FINISHED ON UGLY NOTE. IN MID-AFTERNOON POLICE AT RESIDENCE HALLS ORDERED COOKS AND CUSTODIAL STAFF TO VACATE PREMISES WITH RESULT THAT NO DINNER WAS AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS. APPROXIMATELY 100 STUDENTS TOOK TO STREETS TO PROTEST AND THERE ENSUED BRIEF BUT SHARP STRUGGLE WITH SOME 30 RIOT POLICE (ROCKS AGAINST CLUBS) WHICH POLICE WON. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT A FEW STUDENTS WERE INJURED IN FRACAS, AND THAT UP TO 30 COULD HAVE BEEN DETAINED. MOROT VEHICLES BELONGING TO INNOCENT PASSERS-BY WERE DAMAGED BY STUDENTS'S ROCKS. LOCAL PRESS MARCH 3 HEADLINED STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS OF PREVIOUS DAY.

2. NAIROBI UNIVERSITY CAMPUS RETURNED TO NORMAL MARCH 3. CLASSES RESUMED AND POLICE UNITS WERE WITHDRAWN. AT MID-MORNING SMALL GROUPS OF STUDENTS WERE SPREAD ABOUT LAWN ON MAIN CAMPUS RECOUNTING WITH NERVOUS LAUGHTER AND SEEMING PRIDE EVENTS OF PREVIOUS DAY.

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3. COMMENT: PRESENT GENERATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN KENYA IS NOT USED TO BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY IN POLITICAL TERMS. YET, MARCH 2 DEMONSTRATIONS INVOLVED MORE STUDENTS AND MORE ACTION THAN ANY OTHER STUDENT PROTEST SINCE KARIUKI ASSASSINATION ITSELF IN 1975. AS SUGGESTED REFTTEL, THIS IS MOST LIKELY DUE TO DECEMBER ARREST OF NGUGI WA THIONGO. CAMPUS CONTAINS MANY

INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DISGRUNTLED FOR IDEOLOGICAL AND/OR
PERSONAL REASONS, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER
YESTERDAY'S EVENTS, WHICH REMINDED NEW GENERATION OF
STUDENTS THAT THEY COULD CREATE WAVES AND OBTAIN PUBLICITY,
WILL SERVE AS PRELUDE TO MORE EXTENSIVE PROTEST ACTIVITY.
EMBASSY'S GUESS IS THAT IT WILL NOT; AT LEAST AS LONG AS
PRESENT REGIME IS IN POWER. GOK IS MORE LIKELY TO CLOSE
DOWN UNIVERSITY THAN IT IS TO TOLERATE REPEATED EPISODES
OF STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVISM COUPLED WITH LAWLESNESS.
BLANE

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